

Emergency Responder

WASHINGTON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION



WASHINGTON MILITARY DEPARTMENT

September-October 2002

Upgrade work continues on Amber Alert system

State and private agencies have continued their work into the fall of 2002 to expand and improve Washington's Amber Alert system that seeks the public's help in cases of abducted children.

The Washington State Patrol (WSP), which has the lead in implementing the state's Amber Plan, outlined the Washington State Statewide Amber Plan in an October press conference with Gov. Gary Locke, State Patrol Chief Ronal Serpas, and Maj. Gen. Timothy J. Lowenberg, director, Washington Military Department.

To activate the state Amber plan, the following criteria must be met:

- A child has been taken and the incident is reported to law enforcement;
- The abducted child must be under 18 years of age;
- Law enforcement must believe the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm or death; and,
- There must be enough descriptive information to believe a broadcast will assist in the recovery of the child.

Under the new plan, the WSP will act as the main point of contact for local law enforcement agencies wanting to broadcast their local child-abduction information statewide through the state's Emergency Alert System, which is coordinated and operated by the Emergency Management Division.

Local Amber plans can be implemented, but the state plan will assist local law enforcement officials when they do not have an independent plan in place or when only local notification would be inadequate.

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Maj. Gen. Timothy J. Lowenberg, director, Washington Military Department, addresses media in the State Emergency Operations Center at Camp Murray about state preparedness one year after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Joining him in Gov. Gary Locke's press conference were Secretary of Health Mary Selecky (to the left of Gov. Locke) and State Patrol Chief Ronal Serpas (to the right). (EMD Photo by Rob Harper)

Officials outline preparedness steps since Sept. 11, 2001

Gov. Gary Locke said nearly \$40 million has been spent in Washington since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks to train police and emergency management personnel, strengthen the public health system and to improve other anti-terrorism protections.

"We're doing a lot. We can do more," said Locke at a Sept. 6 press conference in the State Emergency Operations Center at Camp Murray.

Joining Locke at the press conference were Maj. Gen. Timothy J. Lowenberg, Washington Military Department director; State Patrol Chief Ronal Serpas; and Mary Selecky, secretary of the Washington Department of Health.

Gen. Lowenberg said there has been a 45 percent increase since Sept. 11, 2001, in the number of people trained in terrorism preparedness. The military department has distributed \$10 million to local jurisdictions to buy protective gear in case of chemical, biological or radiological attacks.

Chief Serpas said the state patrol has increased terrorism response training by 11 percent over the past year.

Secretary Selecky said the state has received \$20 million in federal aid in the past year to help Washington's local public health officers to add staff and improve planning, disease tracking, training, laboratories, hospitals and communications.

Locke said the state needs to continue to improve the public health system, especially training and communications, so that local health care workers can recognize and alert other parts of the emergency response system to bio-terrorism attacks.

He said the state must train more police, firefighters and emergency medical personnel to handle biological, chemical and radiological threats. He said the state also must continue to practice its responses to terrorism threats.

Work continues on Washington Amber Alert system

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The statewide plan will take advantage of the communications and dispatching capabilities of various 9-1-1 and dispatch centers around the state that have developed their procedures to become “Amber Ready,” as well as other communications systems of state government.

WSP will coordinate with the Washington Department of Transportation to put customized messages about an abducted child on roadside reader boards. The patrol also will send a text message to all law enforcement agencies in the state about the case.

Earlier in May, Washington State’s Emergency Communications Committee adopted guidelines for Amber Alerts.

How it will work

Once an Amber situation is identified, the local law enforcement agency in charge decides if an Amber Alert should be activated at just the local level or all around the state.

- If a statewide alert is needed, that request goes to the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC), which operates around the clock 365 days a year, to coordinate and implement requests for a state-level Amber Alert to go out over the state’s EAS system. That alert is sent to broadcasters, who relay it to the listening public.
- EAS messages will direct listeners to dial 9-1-1 or 877-AMBER35 for the public to report timely, critical information. The latter number will be activated only during an alert and will be pointed to a phone number selected by the requesting agency. The 877-AMBER35 (877-262-3735) number has the advantage that it can be answered at a location where the local sheriff is prepared to take the calls and coordinate information management.

Public calls jam phone lines

Because major events always overload the call-taking abilities of 9-1-1 centers, local public safety answering point (PSAP) planning must be devised and in place at the 9-1-1-communication center to handle the potential overload. One way call volume may be alleviated at the communication center is through the use of the Amber Alert message phone number, 877-AMBER35.

Lines are busy

Callers with Amber information who get no answer when they dial 9-1-1 should stay on the line until their call is answered. Do not hang up on a 9-1-1 call. Callers who get a busy signal when dialing 877-AMBER35 should hang up, wait a minute, and dial again.

Calls received outside of call center’s jurisdiction

Procedures at the call centers must be in place to prevent the loss of one of these important calls. Localities implementing an Amber alert are urged to contact PSAPs statewide to give them the details on how to process calls.

If someone dialed 877-AMBER35 now, she or he will get a recording that says the Washington State Amber Alert Line has been dialed. If an Amber Alert were not in effect, the recording would say the line is not activated at this time.

When the Amber Alert is over, the Washington Emergency Management Division will send an EAS message to broadcasters only. This EAS will inform the broadcasters that the alert has been cancelled.

Just as they began the alert by broadcasting an emergency request for information, TV and radio stations statewide will broadcast an announcement that the alert has been cancelled either because a child has been found or the search is otherwise at an end.

EPA has new grants for hazardous site cleanups

Proposals are due Dec. 16 from local jurisdictions for new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields grants to help communities return contaminated or potentially contaminated properties to reuse.

Passed in January 2002, the Brownfields Law authorized a new cleanup grant program and expanded the program’s eligibility criteria to include petroleum sites, mine-scarred lands, and drug labs. Superfund National Priority List Sites are not eligible for funding.

Under the Brownfields Law, funds are available for assessments, direct cleanup grants, cleanup revolving fund loans, and job training.

Most units of government are eligible to apply for all Brownfields grants. In addition, certain non-profits may apply for Brownfields direct cleanup grants.

Phase 1 grant proposals are due December 16, 2002, for possible funding in summer 2003.

EPA’s draft proposal guidelines detailing the grant programs, eligible activities and application procedures are available on EPA’s website (www.epa.gov/brownfields).

For information, please call EPA’s Northwest Region Brownfields Team at 1-800-424-4EPA, or email <brincefield.timothy@epa.gov>, <morales.susan@epa.gov>, or <slater.mike@epa.gov>.

Local EM Posts Change

Emergency management positions changed in Adams and Island counties in September.

T.J. Harmon resigned as Island County Emergency Services director to accept a regional homeland security position with the Snohomish County Health District.

In Adams County, Public Works Director Todd O’Brien has been named temporary emergency management coordinator to replace Donovan Dorsey, who retired.

Washington to receive preparedness grants

Washington will receive \$6.2 million in federal domestic preparedness grants to improve the state's ability to respond to acts of terrorism involving biological or chemical agents or nuclear, radiological or explosive materials.

The U.S. Department of Justice announced the federal fiscal year 2002 grants on Sept. 24.

Washington will receive \$5.9 million in equipment grants and \$278,000 for training exercises. A minimum of 80 percent of the grant money is to be allocated to local jurisdictions. The state has received a total of \$4 million in DOJ domestic preparedness grants since 2001.

Gov. Gary Locke said that grant money will be assigned according to priorities and recommendations established by the State Emergency Management Council and its State Committee on Terrorism.

Farm aid designated

Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman has determined that there were sufficient production losses to warrant a secretarial designation for Okanogan, Chelan and Douglas counties because of cold weather damages to crops of apples, cherries and other soft fruits between April 23 and May 7 of this year.

Ferry, King, Lincoln, Snohomish, Grant, Kittitas, Skagit and Whatcom were named as contiguous counties.

Gov. Gary Locke requested the designation in late May. Veneman approved the designation Sept. 20 following loss verification by the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

The designation makes farm operators in both primary and contiguous counties eligible to be considered for low-interest loans from FSA if eligibility requirements are met. It also will allow the U.S. Small Business Administration to provide economic injury loans for adversely impacted businesses in those same counties.



Glen Woodbury, director, Washington Emergency Management Division, explains duty officer operations to a delegation of Thailand government agency representatives and emergency managers. The Oct. 22 tour was part of a partnership program between the state of Washington and Thailand. (EMD Photo by Rob Harper)

Washington seeks \$2.5 million for homeland security

Washington State is applying for \$2.54 million in Homeland Security 2002 supplemental funding grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The state will seek grants for emergency operations planning, Citizen Corps Councils and Community Emergency Response (CERT) teams, and emergency operations center assessments. Washington must submit its funding applications by Nov. 8 to the FEMA 10 regional office in Bothell.

In its mid-October announcement, FEMA offered the state three different grant programs. These were:

- \$2.07 million for updating emergency plans at all levels of government, including plans for weapons of mass destruction and other terrorism events.
- \$418,543 for development of citizen corps and community emergency response teams.
- \$50,000 for assessments of the state emergency operations center at Camp Murray and other local and tribal emergency operations centers.

The planning grant proposal would pass through \$1.5 million to local and tribal governments based upon a regional concept, said Jim Schoonover, manager of the Policy, Programs and Training unit of the Emergency Management Division.

He said current plans call for \$517,743 of the planning grant to be retained at the state level to fund EMD's terrorism program, provide coordination of grants to local jurisdictions, and enhance homeland security planning efforts in other state agencies.

Schoonover said current plans would distribute \$313,908 of the citizen corps and CERT grant to local and tribal governments and retain \$104,636 at the state level to form citizen councils and provide CERT training.

In regard to the emergency operations center assessments, Schoonover said \$50,000 grant would be used for assessments that would enable the state to compete for additional federal funds to upgrade the centers at a future date. The federal program, however, will require a 50 percent non-federal match for emergency operations center construction grants, he said.

Personnel

Ken Back, manager of the Emergency Management Program Grants and an EMD employee since 1992, will leave Nov. 18 to become part of the state Department of Health's Bioterrorism project. Back also had worked in EMD's E911 program.

Diane Offord, manager of EMD's Response and Recovery unit, was honored Sept. 26 for her 15 years of state service.

Lori Guerrero, program coordinator in EMD's Disaster Recovery Office in Olympia, was recognized Sept. 26 for 10 years of state service.

Chris Long, senior program coordinator in charge of EMD's Search and Rescue program, received recognition Sept. 26 for his 10 years of state service.

Dave Rider has been promoted from program coordinator to Information Technology Applications Specialist. His new position will transfer him from the Response and Recovery Unit's Emergency Operations Section to the unit's Telecommunications Section.

Lorri Hergert was appointed program assistant in the Enhanced 911 Unit starting Nov. 1. She joined EMD in 1998 as a program coordinator in the mitigation section of the Mitigation Analysis and Plans Unit.

Ute Weber was promoted to a program assistant position in the Analysis and Plans section of the Mitigation, Analysis and Plans Unit.

WSEMA selects executive board for 2003-2004

Members of the Washington State Emergency Management Association (WSEMA) elected the following slate of executive board officers for 2003-2004 at the association's fall convention:

- President: Roger Serra, director Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management (DEM).
- Secretary-treasurer: John Scheer, director, Franklin County DEM.
- First Vice President: Butch Aiken, director, Asotin County DEM.
- Second Vice President: Phyllis Mann, director, Kitsap County DEM.
- East Side Representative: JoAnn Boggs, director, Pend Oreille County DEM.
- West Side Representative: Trudy Winterfeld, director, Cowlitz County DEM.

Weber has worked at EMD as a secretary administrator since 2001.

Teresa Lewis was appointed secretary administrative in the Enhanced 911 Unit in September. She joined EMD in 1999 as an office assistant senior in the E911 Unit.

Andrew Bohlander joined EMD Sept. 1 as a hazards technology program coordinator in the Analysis and Plans Section of the Mitigation, Analysis and Plans Unit. He previously worked with the Washington Sea Grant Program.

- Private Sector Representative: Jerry Gardner, business continuity manager, Safeco Corp.
- Public Sector Representative: Chris Mudgett, special project manager; County Road Administration Board.
- Immediate past President: Sam Lorenz, director, Grant County DEM.

Serra and Scheer will be WSEMA's representatives to the Committee on Terrorism, and Winterfeld and Boggs will represent the association on the Emergency Management Council.

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Glen Woodbury, Director

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